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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9204
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3733
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9943
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4347
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0205
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0089
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0225
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3934
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2202
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000176

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REOPENS IN TASHKENT

REF: A. TASHKENT 167 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. 07 TASHKENT 1345 (NOTAL)

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Human Rights Watch (HRW) reopened its Tashkent office with the arrival of its new Uzbekistan country director, Igor Vorontsov, on February 6, shortly after a visit by EU Commission members to Tashkent (ref A). As a Russian citizen (from Saint Petersburg), Vorontsov did not need a visa to enter Uzbekistan, but he will eventually need to receive accreditation from the Ministry of Justice to live and work in Uzbekistan. Though still a registered organization in Uzbekistan, HRW was forced to temporarily close its Tashkent office in July 2007 after its last expatriate staff member was refused accreditation (ref B).

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff spoke briefly over the phone with Vorontsov on February 8, who arrive safely in Tashkent on February 6 and so far has not experienced any difficulties. Vorontsov was accompanied by Giorgi Gogia, a HRW researcher from Georgia, who also worked temporarily in HRW's Tashkent office this past summer before it was closed. Poloff and Pol-Econ Chief will be meeting with Voronstov on February 11.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The Uzbeks have taken several steps in the past month on improving human rights (septel) and are acutely aware of both of the EU sanctions debate and new U.S. legislation, signed by the President in December 2007, threatening a visa ban. Human Rights Watch has called for continued EU "pressure" on Uzbekistan, but in its dealings with us, it has shown itself willing at least to consider arguments that change is occurring and on balance that sanctions do more harm than good.

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